

quality of the land and restore the health of the ecosystem of their traditional ancestral lands. In addition, the lands will be used for ceremonial and other traditional purposes.

Finally, Santa Fe, Rio Arriba and Los Alamos counties in New Mexico, the National Congress of American Indians, and the National Audubon Society's New Mexico State Office, the Quivira Coalition and the Santa Fe Group of the Sierra Club support the acquisition and transfer of these lands.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Resources Committee to pass this important legislation for the people of San Ildefonso and Santa Clara.

INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION TO CHANGE HOPE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

HON. DAVE CAMP

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 29, 2003

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, the passage of the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997 represented a watershed event in the relationship between student support and tax policy. The Act's signature initiative, the Hope Scholarship Program, provides annual benefits to students and the families rivaling the support provided through Pell Grants and other long-standing forms of federal aid. However, many of the students who need help the most do not benefit from the Hope Scholarship Program.

Today, Congressman JIM MCGOVERN and I are reintroducing legislation that would address these shortcomings. Currently, the Hope tax credit can be used for only tuition and related expenses when college students must pay for much more than just tuition. Our legislation would allow Hope Scholarships to cover required fees, books, supplies and equipment. Additionally, a student's eligibility is currently reduced by any other grants they receive—federal, state or private. As a result, benefits have been limited primarily to middle and upper-middle income taxpayers and explain why less than one-fifth of all full-time students attending community colleges qualify for maximum Hope Scholarship benefits. Our legislation would ensure that any Pell Grants and Supplemental Educational Opportunity grants a student receives are not counted against the student's eligible expenses when the Hope Scholarship is computed.

This legislation has bi-partisan cosponsors and support from numerous higher education organizations. I urge the House to bring up this legislation in the near future. I yield back the balance of my time.

INTERFAITH CAREPARTNERS

HON. JOHN ABNEY CULBERSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 29, 2003

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, February 2, 2003, Interfaith CarePartners will celebrate the unprecedented milestone of one million hours of volunteer community service. On behalf of the people of Texas' Congressional District Seven, I want to congratulate

and honor Interfaith CarePartners for their incredible accomplishment and for their remarkable service to our community.

Interfaith CarePartners, founded in 1985, has evolved into a national movement of faith-based volunteerism that promotes, sponsors, and conducts volunteer caregiving and associated activities in partnership with churches and synagogues. They are "Houston's caregiver," sponsoring the nation's original and largest faith-based caregiving program with 1,600 volunteers in 83 congregations who serve approximately 1,000 families per year, and providing 60,000 hours of volunteer service for frail adults and children. Volunteers also provide in-home care and caregiver respites to more than 3,600 Alzheimer's and dementia-affected families, frail elderly, and other chronically or terminally ill adults, severely impaired children, and people with AIDS. Partner congregations span the theological spectrum within Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, and Judaism.

Interfaith CarePartners has earned the gratitude of all the families they have helped and the admiration of everyone who knows their work and the depth of their selfless devotion to improve the lives of their neighbors. Today, we honor and thank Interfaith CarePartners for their extraordinary achievement in reaching one million hours of volunteer community service. I would like also to congratulate Nancy Reagan, Dr. John McGovern, and Chip Carlisle and Wells Fargo for receiving the Sustaining Presence Award, an annual award presented to distinguished individuals and organizations whose commitments and activities constitute an exemplary contribution to the creation of caring communities. All of you exemplify the best of America.

INTRODUCTION OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS ACCESSIBILITY ACT

HON. THOMAS E. PETRI

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 29, 2003

Mr. PETRI. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Instructional Materials Accessibility Act, which will ensure that, for the first time, blind students will be able to fully enjoy an equal opportunity to a quality education. This same bill attracted 88 bipartisan cosponsors in the 107th Congress, most notably my friend GEORGE MILLER, the Ranking Member of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, who has worked closely with me on crafting this legislation.

Unfortunately, it is the exception rather than the rule that blind students have access to textbooks for a given class at the beginning of the school year. Because of the cumbersome process needed to translate a textbook into Braille or other specialized format, it can take up to six months for the blind student to have the same materials as his or her sighted peers. Only a heroic effort can save this student from being hopelessly behind in class.

This was not much of an issue before the 1960's. Before that time, most blind children attended centralized schools for the blind, and there was (and is) existing infrastructure, such as the American Printing House for the Blind in Kentucky, to provide support services such

as production of Braille textbooks. Beginning in the 1960's, though, blind children began attending schools in their home communities, and now the vast majority do so. As a result, every local school district which has one or more blind students must obtain or create the necessary specialized textbooks for these students. However, again this is a laborious process that is beyond the capability of most school districts to carry out quickly or easily.

Although states already have the obligation under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other federal statutes to provide equivalent educational opportunities to disabled and non-disabled students, it has become apparent that specific and practical standards need to be put in place to anticipate and meet accessibility needs in this area. The Instructional Materials Accessibility Act (IMAA) takes several approaches that, taken together, will greatly reduce the waiting time for blind students to receive their textbooks.

This bill establishes a standardized electronic file format for instructional materials. Conversion into an electronic format is a necessary step in the process of creating a Braille version of a textbook. Twenty-six states currently require publishers to provide electronic copies of textbooks but have no agreed-upon file format. This drives up costs for publishers and often results in unusable electronic files provided. And it does nothing to reduce the months-long period needed for production of the specialized textbook.

Our bill requires statewide plans to ensure that students who are blind or visually impaired have access to instructional materials in formats they can use at the same time the materials are provided to all other students. Our bill will establish a national clearinghouse to provide "one-stop shopping" for local school districts to acquire the needed materials. In the future, publishers will be able to submit an electronic copy of a textbook to this clearinghouse, rather than having to deal with inconsistent state requirements. Finally, our bill authorizes a small capacity-building grant program to assist state and local educators in using electronic files supplied by publishers.

This issue has been a bone of contention between textbook publishers and the blind community for quite a while. However, working together over a period of many months, both communities finally arrived at a mutually agreeable and practical solution to this problem and the publishers and the blind advocates strongly support the IMAA as introduced in both Houses.

In the 107th Congress, the support and great need for this legislation prompted the Department of Education to fund the development of a voluntary standardized electronic format for specialized instructional materials. Once completed, this standardized file format would implement a significant piece of the IMAA. However, a standardized file format by itself will not solve all the problems which cause delays in the delivery of textbooks to visually impaired students. That is why this legislation is still needed. Once implemented, the IMAA will make life easier for states, publishers and most of all blind students, at a very modest cost.